

FrontlineMatters

For workers in transport

Issue 26 January 2025

Welfare facilities

Page 10

CIRAS reports
Insights
Features



CIRAS
Confidential Safety Hotline

Report hotline (UK): 0800 4 101 101
Report hotline (ROI): 1800 239 239
Freepost CIRAS
CIRAS reporting app
www.ciras.org.uk

((CIRAS reporting app))

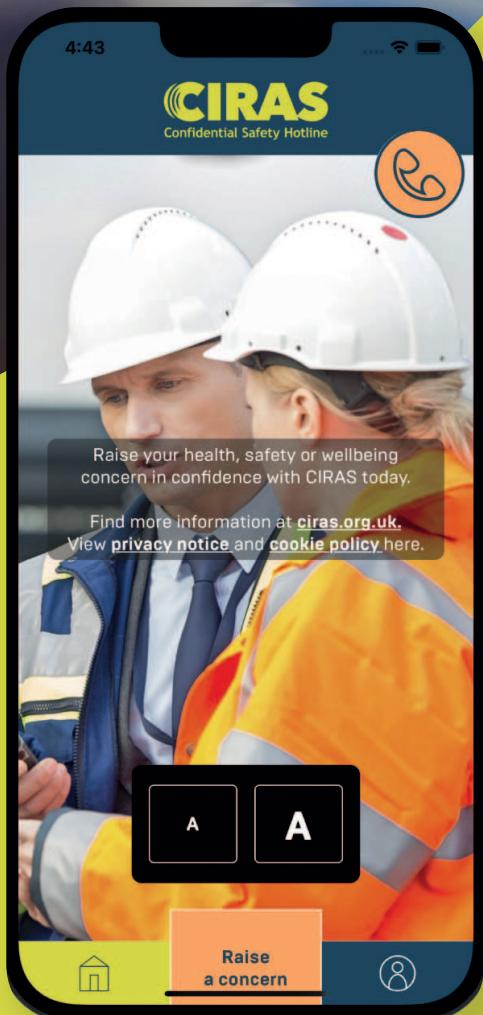
Got a health or safety concern?

Report it in confidence,
on the go.

CIRAS is the confidential safety hotline for transport. Download the CIRAS reporting app on Google Play or the App Store to raise your health, safety and wellbeing concerns. We protect your identity and share your concern with the right people, so they can act.



Scan me



Editor's note

Welcome to Frontline Matters.

New Year can be a chance to reflect and make resolutions. That goes for workplace safety too. If something's been on your mind, make a fresh start this year and raise your concerns.

Not sure what concerns you can report confidentially, or how CIRAS fits alongside other reporting channels? Learn more on page 4.

You might not know you can use CIRAS to raise a concern for a company that isn't your employer. On page 14, find out which sectors most often report

and receive these types of concern, and what reports for other companies are about.

Violence at work affects customer-facing roles in all sectors. If you're in rail, see page 14 to find out how to share your experiences in a new survey. Responses are anonymous. The results will inform future policies, so it's worth being heard.

Our reports start on page 5. Read how people were heard when they reported their concerns to us, and what happened after that.

Trespass on the railway is not only illegal but dangerous. Learn how you can help to prevent it—and maybe even save someone's life—on page 12. Plus, read five brief trespass reports on page 13.

Our insightful guest article from Samaritans on page 6 shares how you can be a better listener to everyone.

There's plenty more, including welfare facilities (page 10) and light rail data (page 8).

Stay safe!

The CIRAS team

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Did you know you can use CIRAS?

If you'd like to change your Frontline Matters order, such as the name and address it goes to, or how many copies, contact: editor@ciras.org.uk

Read our privacy notice at:
<https://www.ciras.org.uk/privacy-notice/>

CIRAS reporting app:





What you can report to us

Here's what you can contact CIRAS confidential safety hotline about.

These are many of the sort of concerns we listen to:

- welfare facilities
- equipment
- rules and procedures
- unsafe practices
- hazardous substances
- training and competence
- fatigue
- people's environment.

There's more you can report to us. If ways of working, where you work, processes or policies risk the wellbeing, safety and health of you, your teammates, or the public, you can tell us. We also listen to concerns about trespass (see page 13) and infrastructure assets.

Once we've listened, we share your concerns confidentially with the relevant company so they can act. They respond, and we share their response with you. We protect your identity.

Change

Any changes and how they're implemented can increase risk, including changes to a team or how it communicates with other teams. Introducing new equipment, rolling stock, or new procedures brings risk.

Technology change can also impact safety. We pass your concerns about change to the right people, confidentially.

Culture

Work can impact wellbeing. Negative experiences at work can affect you as well as your work. You may be concerned about working culture, hours, workload, and the systems to support you in challenging times. Sharing your concerns confidentially can help. See more online (link in box) about when to use CIRAS and when to use other channels.

What not to report to us

Please don't report real-time or emergency incidents to us.

We couldn't guarantee a response in time for a safe outcome. Use more immediate reporting channels instead.

We don't take reports that relate to a specific individual, including personal grievances or concerns about someone's drug or alcohol use. Please use more appropriate channels.

When you contact us, we help you as best we can. If you call us with a concern we can't take forward, our team always ensures you know where and how to report it.

Find out more

bit.ly/4ajaMdk



Did you know?

- You can raise a concern with us for any company—not just your employer. See page 14.
- You can tell us your concern whether you've reported it already or if it's the first time you're reporting it anywhere.
- If there's imminent risk of harm, use more immediate reporting channels instead of CIRAS.
- We share your concerns with the company. They investigate.
- We have no regulatory power, but ensure you get a response.

Level crossing safety risks

Signallers at Ashwell signal box control the raising and lowering of barriers 400 yards away at the rural Gatehouse level crossing, on the line from Leicester to Peterborough.

The crossing is mechanically operated because there is little road traffic. Signallers should be able to view it from the signal box on CCTV monitors. This is especially important when it's dark or in adverse weather.

CIRAS received a report that the two cameras overlooking the track hadn't worked for over a year. The CCTV showed nothing. The reporter believed Network Rail knew this but hadn't told staff when it'd be fixed.

They were also concerned that the only warning at the crossing was a bell sound. This would be unsuitable for deaf users

and could be hard to hear from noisy vehicles such as tractors.

Crossings usually have a visual warning too. Not having one increases the risk of users being trapped in the crossing without the signaller knowing. Crossing users can press an emergency button to contact the signal box if trapped, but this didn't remove the need to resolve the other issues. Staff were uneasy while working, concerned there could be an incident.

Network Rail visited in response and discussed possible solutions with the signalling team. A third-party contractor had installed the camera originally without a service contract.

A week later, Network Rail replaced the camera system with a high-definition camera facing road traffic in each



A rural level crossing

direction and a 180-degree camera to monitor the crossing centrally. Signallers now have full visibility of the road and crossing on one monitor. This installation includes a service contract, with support.

Network Rail's engineering team will investigate other potential improvements at the crossing, including a visual warning.

View the report:

<https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04795>



Get the RSSB Rule Book app

Our easy-to-use app gives you 24/7 access to the Rule Book at your fingertips.

With our recently upgraded app, you can expect better performance, accessibility, and user experience, giving you the control you need.



And access it through internet browsers

www.rssb.co.uk



Small talk saves lives

Samaritans shares with us thoughts on listening well to support others who are struggling.

‘Effective listening and dialogue skills empower people to spot the signs that someone may not be okay and then take appropriate steps to help. Since the first call to Samaritans on 2 November 1953, we’ve been training volunteers to provide emotional support.

‘For nearly 15 years, we’ve worked in partnership with Network Rail to prevent suicide on the railway. We’ve trained over 37,000 rail workers, helping them spot signs that someone might be in distress and how to intervene, by developing their listening and dialogue skills. The training also helps them identify if they or a colleague may be affected by something they’ve witnessed, and how to give or get support.’

Helping others

‘Listening, not just hearing, is important. Sometimes people find it hard to know what to say to someone struggling. “Are you okay?” is one way to start that difficult conversation. Use an open question to ask about what they’ve shared. Focus on how they feel at that moment, not practicalities.

‘Sometimes people who are struggling close a conversation with “I’m fine,” but you can see that they’re not. Asking twice encourages the person to share what’s wrong.

‘We hear that sometimes people worry they might come across as nosy or might make the situation worse. This fear is natural when dealing with difficult and anxious conversations. However, we know being listened to by someone showing care and support really helps.

‘Sometimes the person you wish to support by listening isn’t ready to speak. Just because they don’t feel able to speak now doesn’t mean they won’t speak later. Signal that you are always free to listen. Knowing they have someone to turn to will be a considerable comfort.

‘Give short words of encouragement, but don’t try to put yourself in their position. Phrases such as “I know how you feel,” or “That must be terrible,” aren’t helpful. They put your own views or emotions on the situation, and you can’t know how they feel.

‘Be honest. Try not to fix or solve their problems or pain. Being honest often acknowledges that you don’t have the solutions, but you’re there to listen and support them.’

Listening training

‘We teach dialogue and listening skills based on the Samaritans volunteer training model. This emphasises listening, asking open questions, and being empathic.

‘From April 2023 to March 2024, there were nearly 2,000 life-saving interventions on the rail network. Each life was saved by someone stopping and talking to them. Without rail staff doing the training and looking out for struggling people, these lives would not have been saved.’

If you work in rail and are interested in Samaritans’ listening training, contact railcompaniestraining@samaritans.org.

Samaritans is available 24/7. Call free on **116 123** or email jo@samaritans.org.

Lone working

Cleaning operatives working in stations unstaffed by London Underground (LU) risk their safety, a reporter said. Public frustration focuses on them.

Mobile phones and CCTV don't stop assault. Lone cleaning staff can't access safe areas as they're locked. The sharps box to dispose of needles or syringes found while cleaning is here too.

Usually an unstaffed LU station is unplanned. After the report, ABM introduced new measures. Now, operatives arriving at an unstaffed station must tell their supervisor, who will join them or arrange for a cleaner to come from the nearest station. LU will tell ABM before the shift if an unstaffed station is planned.

An operative finding a needle at an unstaffed station should tell their supervisor, who will bring a single-use sharps kit. It will stay in the secured bin room until it can go into the sharps box.

ABM also introduced a policy of travelling in plain clothes.

View the report: <https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04860>

Foot crossing visibility

There was poor visibility at Hatches foot crossing in Frimley Green because of a faulty lamp post. Only half the crossing was lit during early mornings and late evenings. The reporter to CIRAS was concerned by how long it was taking to fix.

The crossing is used frequently and, as it's in the middle of an S bend, trains cannot see it clearly. Crossing users must judge when it's safe to cross. They might not be able to do this safely given the poor visibility and 60 mph line speed.

There's a double whistle board—prompting train drivers to sound the horn—suggesting the

crossing is high-risk even when lights are working.

Network Rail investigated and identified that the lights were outside the railway boundary and owned by Surrey County Council. Network Rail's Signal and Telecoms team visited the site and confirmed the downside lighting wasn't working. The upside lighting was adequate, but the faulty street light reduced visibility of downside signs.

Network Rail asked Surrey County Council to fix the street light urgently and they did.

View the report: <https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04842>



Hatches crossing at Frimley Green © Simon Burchell/Wikimedia Commons

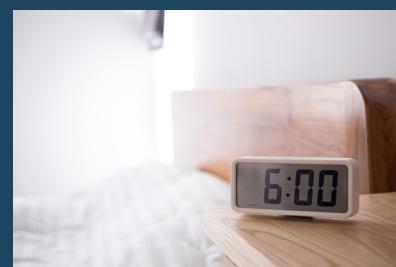
Short-notice hotel booking

A reporter was concerned about short-notice hotel bookings. They cited a time when it led to inadequate room arrangements.

When staff arrived at the hotel arranged, they were told to go to a second hotel 20 minutes away. Staff then found that the booked rooms were unsuitable, without enough beds. They felt it wasn't appropriate to contact company channels at that time of night, and drove home. This meant they'd exceeded fatigue limits and were at risk of road accidents. Booking hotels late could cause this again.

The reporter wanted this occasion investigated, and clarification on what to do if there are issues at night.

Vital Human Resources (Vital) said it plans shifts and rosters within the rules and standards of client fatigue management. It fully endorses booking accommodation to reduce fatigue risk, and generally uses a third-party online booking agent. This has been effective to secure accommodation at short notice. There was a problem this time, without the required suitability and number of rooms being confirmed.



If rooms are needed at short notice in future, Vital will book directly with the hotel or accommodation. Employees can use the on-call facility to book a hotel if something is unsuitable.

View the report: <https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04698>



Focus on: light rail

We look at reports from the light rail sector raised with CIRAS. What do they show?

Most of the health and safety concerns for the light rail sector reported to CIRAS since 2022 relate to equipment.

These concerns about equipment often reference the reliability or condition of assets, such as on-board cameras, handheld radios, or on-board heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.

Rules and procedures have given cause for concern too—specifically, the effectiveness of internal processes for reporting equipment faults.

Reporters have felt fault reports were not being acknowledged.

CIRAS also asks reporters to share their thoughts on the root cause of the issue they're reporting. Reporters with concerns for light rail said most often that the cause was managers knowing about issues but not taking sufficient measures to fix them. CIRAS can help identify potential improvements in safety and reporting culture, as well as risks and concerns.

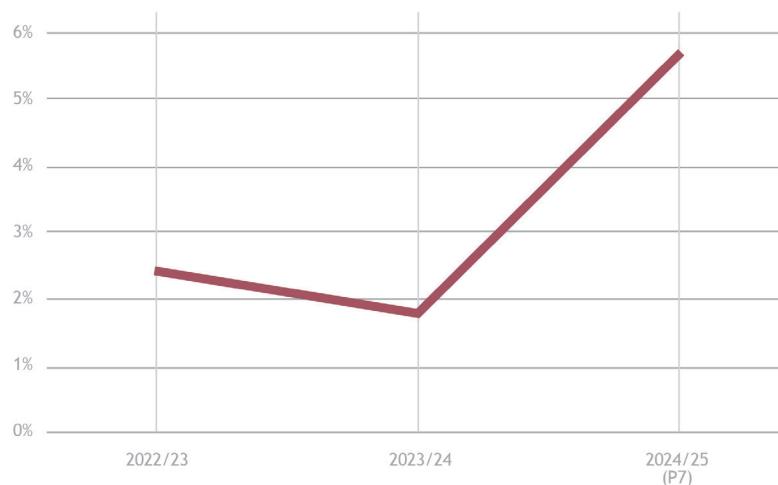
While our light rail reports highlight reporters' specific

individual experiences, there is only a small number of CIRAS reports for this sector. The data doesn't imply there's a widespread problem with fault reporting in light rail. However, it does tell us that, where people feel they're not heard, they may be reluctant to report openly.

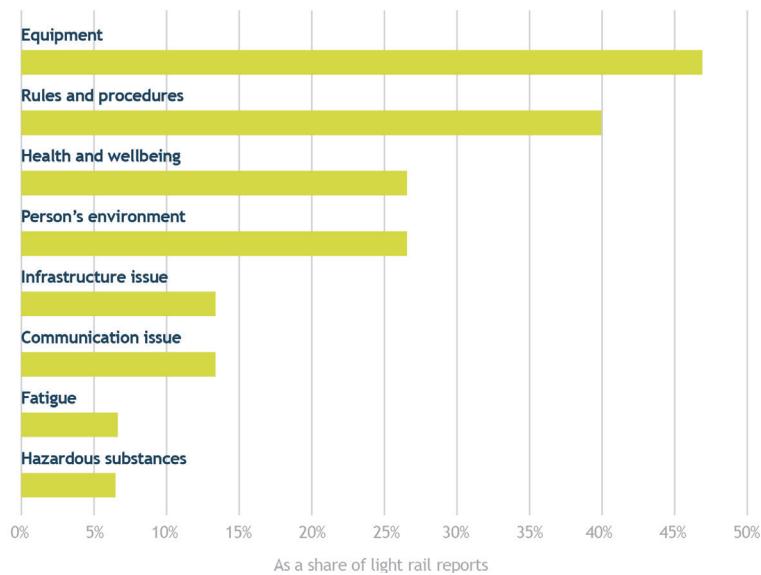
With each report we receive, we can alert the member so they can investigate and act.

You can contact CIRAS if you work in the light rail sector. We protect your identity when we pass on your concerns.

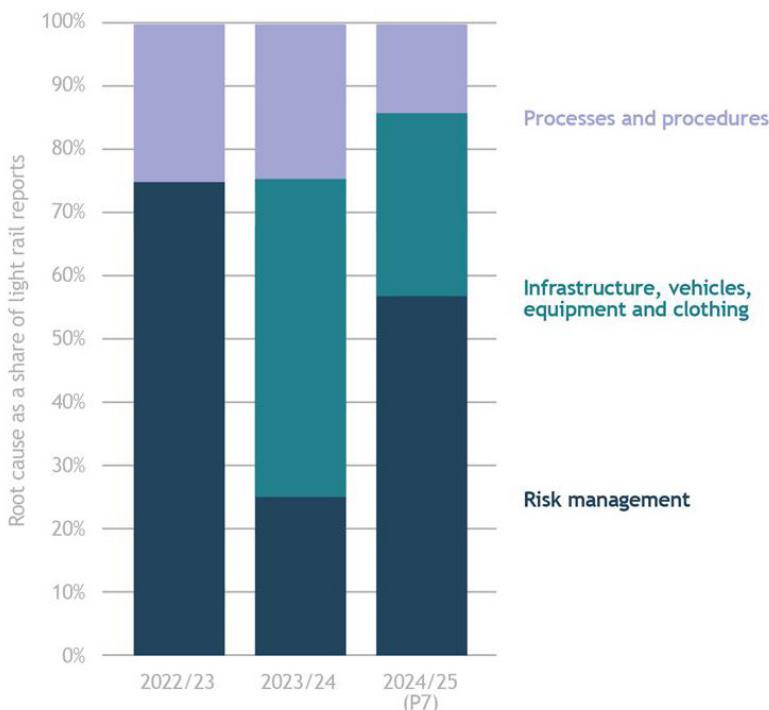
Light rail reports as a share of all reports



Light rail report themes



Perceived root causes of light rail reports



Light rail reports

Here are some of the reports raised with us. To read them, register on our website with your work email and sign in. Then, go to <https://www.ciras.org.uk/reports>, and use the search filter on that page to find reports for light rail, or for any sector or topic you choose.

- Concern over a lack of training for engineers
- Faulty tram air-conditioning
- Unreliable two-way staff radios
- Concern over faulty cameras and in-cab monitors
- Concern about the process following an operational incident and safety reporting culture
- Faulty seats causing driver distraction
- Concern over trespass and antisocial behaviour



Concerns about welfare facilities

Our reporting analyst Helen Redman shares what we've heard and the actions that followed.

We listen to concerns from all sectors about having poor welfare facilities, or none. In 2024/25 so far, we've processed more concerns about welfare facilities than in all of 2022/23, and more than half the total of 2023/24.

Concerns have been about mess rooms, toilets, washrooms, changing areas or canteens. Some are about unhygienic conditions due to no running water or soap to wash hands.

There are also reports about mess rooms being unsuitable because they don't have enough space for staff to take breaks, or because they aren't cleaned regularly. Sewage leaks and recurring blocked toilets are other issues that prompt people to reach out to CIRAS.

Some reporters raise concerns about not having toilet access. This can be because the toilets aren't nearby, or are closed when staff need them. Welfare issues can be complex. There may be a very short time to use the toilet because of how long it takes a tram to reach terminus stations and how little

time is available once there. The distance to and from the tram to toilets adds to this.

Most reporters raising concerns about welfare facilities tried to use another channel first. They often express frustration at waiting for the issue to be fixed, given the basic need for toilets and running water.

Actions following CIRAS reports have included:

- fixing faults that had led to inconsistent or no hot water available to wash hands
- fixing faults with hand dryers
- replacing or upgrading mess room storage cupboards and food preparation areas that had been in disrepair
- fixing staff toilets
- improving temporary arrangements, such as increasing the cleaning of alternative toilet facilities.

We're here to listen if you've tried other channels without success or prefer to raise concerns confidentially.

Read the full article at bit.ly/4fZbFZY.

Unhygienic bus stop WC

A reporter described that the toilet for bus drivers at a bus stand was blocked frequently and there was no way of washing hands.

The report led to the blockages being cleared, and a regular cleaning and maintenance schedule was put in place to improve the conditions.

Unusable rail office WC

The men's toilets in a station office hadn't been used for over a year because of an unstable floor. Staff had to use the disabled toilet. This wasn't practical due to how many staff used this one toilet, and because it was cleaned infrequently.

After the report, the company ensured work took place to replace the floor and redecorate so the toilets were usable.

Image of welfare facilities at a station © Richard Webb/Wikimedia Commons. This is unrelated to any concerns.

Boarding ramp concerns

It's difficult for staff to carry a long portable ramp at Brighton station. The ramp helps wheelchair users board or alight Class 387 trains at platform 8.

The reporter to CIRAS said staff had to lean when carrying it, to compensate for its size, against manual handling advice. Its storage was another concern: unsecured, lengthways against a bench at the buffer stop end. It could be knocked over and is heavy enough to injure someone.

Although this ramp was needed, as the gap between Class 387 trains and platform 8 was larger than on other platforms, it risked musculoskeletal injury.

Gavia Thameslink Railway (GTR) said the management team had been working with staff to manage the risks. A risk assessment involved station staff. One control was an extra person to help carry the ramp. A serious incident review in



March followed an accident where an on-board supervisor mistakenly used the standard on-board ramp. Combined with the passenger's oversized electric wheelchair, this led to the wheelchair tipping over. The passenger was injured. This shows the long ramp is needed.

After the report, a different design with wheels was made and delivered to Brighton to be trialled. Most station staff who used it preferred the original ramp, so it has remained in use with the controls.

GTR asked its timetabling team to explore if Class 387s could be routed into different platforms, but it wasn't feasible for all services for the foreseeable future. GTR also requested a new ramp holder. This work was paused partly due to heritage concerns—and while trialling the alternative ramp, as this would need a different holder—but the ramp holder should be installed soon.

View the report:
<https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04813>

Courier safety at depot

Courier drivers deliver to the Stadler Rail building at Canton depot's Swansea end. Someone told us they were concerned about them entering a railway depot without understanding the risks, such as travelling across frequently used tracks.

Couriers pass safety signs on security gates before entering. These often aren't visible with the gates open. The security team greets couriers and advises where to go. However, the reporter believes couriers don't receive appropriate information about depot risks and procedures to stay safe.

Transport for Wales' (TfW) depot management reviewed the goods-in delivery area.

They identified that all road vehicle signs were TfW-branded, except for a sign for maintenance partner Stadler on a temporary building seen from the maintenance stores' goods-in location. This could be why couriers were going there. They removed the sign and erected a joint Stadler/TfW sign indicating the goods-in route.

The team also saw the gate was often left open when the stores team collected deliveries. The gate has since been modified with an extra hinge. The signs are now always visible but a section can be opened enough for safe forklift truck operation.

Couriers and non-authorised people shouldn't be in the position reported. The changes



make the signs clearer, and any reoccurrence would be deliberate. The depot's 24-hour security ensures only authorised people enter. TfW added that the train movements noted are under the safe control of a depot operations team shunter, who takes due care and is vigilant.

View the report: <https://www.ciras.org.uk/report-04769>



You vs. Train

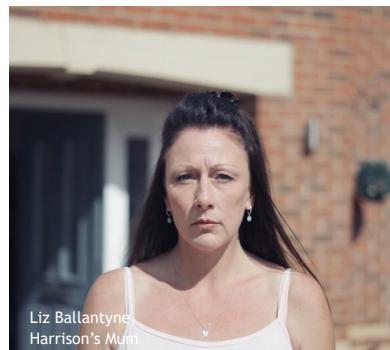
Everyone in rail has a part to play in managing the risks and keeping the railway safe.

You vs Train is the rail industry's campaign to prevent trespass. The railway touches every community in Britain. Railway lines and depots are on our doorstep, yet so often the public are unaware of them and the risks. If they're not secure, it can lead to tragic events.

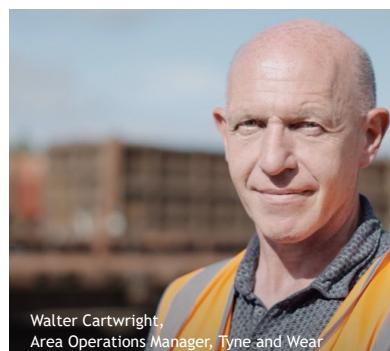
On 25 June 2017, 11-year-old Harrison Ballantyne was hit by 25,000 volts of electricity at a rail freight depot. He died at the scene. To make sure Harrison's story is never repeated, You vs Train has produced a video designed to help the rail industry learn the vital lessons. Please watch it (scan the QR code, right), share it with colleagues, and make it the advice in your trespass risk strategy and training.



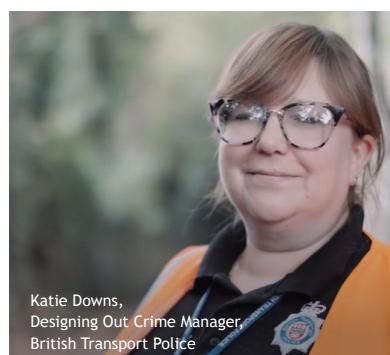
Drew Ballantyne,
Harrison's Dad



Liz Ballantyne,
Harrison's Mum



Walter Cartwright,
Area Operations Manager, Tyne and Wear



Katie Downs,
Designing Out Crime Manager,
British Transport Police

You vs. Train

Everyone loses when you step on the track

For rail workers



If you work in rail, visit youvstrain.co.uk/partners-area/ or scan the QR code to watch the video and find out how you can play a part in keeping the railway safe.

For everyone

Follow the campaign at youvstrain.co.uk. Learn about the dangers of trespassing on the railway, with real-life stories and videos.

5 trespass concerns

Here's what happened after CIRAS reports.

1. Graffiti target

Trespassers were accessing a trackside bridge in Glasgow to graffiti it. They came through the palisade fence or station platform. A full review of the area with the British Transport Police (BTP) followed the report. BTP patrols increased. The boundary fence was fixed. Anti-climb devices were recommended for access gates closest to the graffiti. Work was planned to block an area dug out for access, and to install a fence under a billboard. A longer-term aim was to build closer relationships with the community and encourage graffiti artists to graffiti only in safe, pre-determined places.

4. Community engagement

People were trespassing on the track at Lelant station. At the south end of the platform, a user-operated crossing provides a way to cross safely. At the other end, there is no authorised crossing, but people cross there to reach river walks. It wasn't a high-priority location because there were no reports—the CIRAS report flagged the location. A visible camera was installed, along with anti-trespass signs and new fencing. Rail safety education was delivered to local schools, and there was an engagement day at the station with visible police presence.

2. Gate redesign

A gate from a car park to a Leeds railway station platform wasn't closing behind staff. There was a risk of the public entering it, and a train stabled there had been graffitied. The gate used to have a hydraulic arm. This was replaced when the gate was reported as faulty. The CIRAS report revealed the springs that replaced it also weren't working. Solutions considered were a stronger hydraulic arm or a more lightweight gate. New signs reminded staff to close the gate. Staff were briefed on the importance of this.

3. Distraction risk

Passengers were crossing in front of trains leaving Penistone station. In several near misses, a train driver has had to sound a horn at people using the foot crossing who may have been distracted or complacent that a train could stop. Disregarding warning signs is deliberate misuse of the crossing: a criminal offence. New signage was added warning users not to cross in front of trains at the platform, as well as stop markings on the ground. Chicane and gates were added to the crossing approaches, preventing people from walking straight onto the crossing. A footbridge was one of the long-term solutions being considered.

5. Safety campaign

People were parking on a road and trespassing on the railway in summertime to reach Lough Owel Lake. The area around the footbridge and car park was secured already. After the report, the area was inspected for obvious trespass locations, and trespass reports from the location reviewed. Patrols were already taking place, including fence checks, and any defects reported. Anti-trespass signs in the area would be reviewed to see if more were needed. There was later a public safety campaign focusing on the area, in summer 2024.

Raising concerns to another company

Did you know you can use CIRAS to share your concerns with a company that's not your employer?

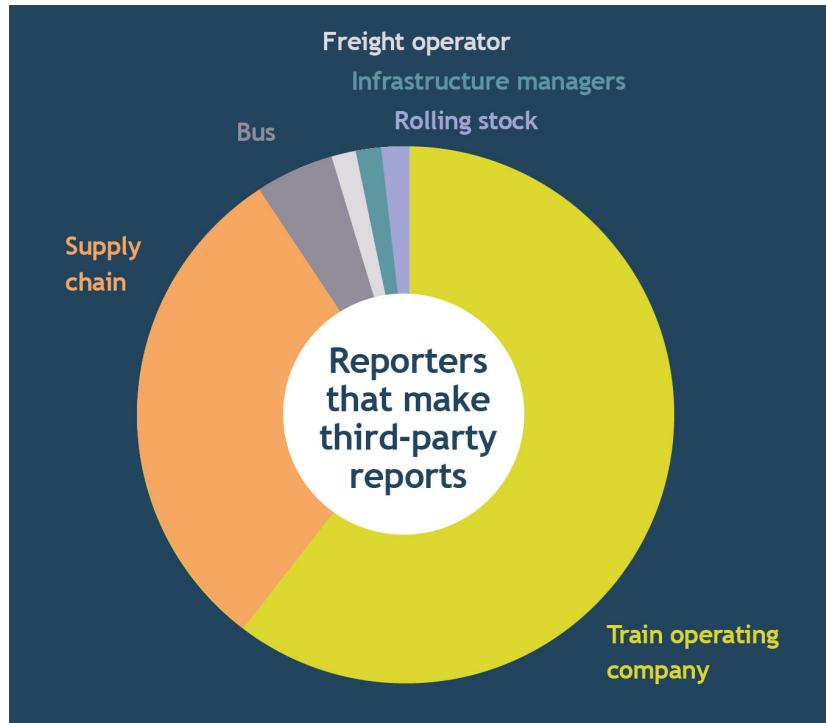
Sometimes it's obvious who to tell about your safety concerns. You have a line manager, supervisor, or someone in charge of site safety who wants to listen. If suitable, you could also use the close-call system or other internal reporting channels. Many channels are available, whether you're reporting an incident that's already occurred, or you're concerned something might happen.

Sometimes, it's less clear. When your concern is about a work site or task your employer doesn't own or manage, you might not be sure who you can share your concern with.

You could tell the responsible person on site, or someone who works there. They can help you to be heard by the right person.

There could be an emergency number you can call. If you're on the railway, Network Rail has a 24-hour hotline to report a safety threat to yourself or others. Transport for London has Safeline, open to its employees, agency staff and contractors, as well as the Streetcare reporting tool for issues with London's roads.

When there's no imminent risk of harm, CIRAS confidential safety hotline is an option.



We listen to your safety concerns when you feel you can't use internal channels, or if you've tried to use them without success. We're also here for you if your concern relates to a client or contractor and you don't feel comfortable challenging working practices.

CIRAS 2023/24 reporting data

- Most reporters who raised CIRAS reports for a company other than their employer were from train operating companies. They accounted for 60% of these reports.
- The largest group receiving CIRAS reports from reporters who were not their employees was infrastructure managers (56%). Train operating companies came in second place, receiving 18% of these reports. The supply chain was in third place with 8%.
- Half of the reports raised for a company other than the reporter's employer were on the theme of infrastructure issues.

Workplace violence survey

Do you work in a customer-facing role on Britain's railway?

A new survey from Rail Delivery Group and the University of Cambridge is interested to find out about your experiences and perceptions of work-related violence. The results will inform policies to help improve your safety at work.

It takes 15 minutes to complete the survey, and all responses are anonymous. To encourage you to share your views and experiences freely, the survey doesn't ask for any personal information.

Find the survey and information at bit.ly/3OV5Stu.

Do you have any concerns about health, wellbeing or safety?

Have you tried internal reporting channels, or don't feel that you can?

Let us know your concern by sending this FREEPOST form. Or for a faster response contact us via our freephone, app or webform.

Any information you provide will be treated as confidential.

We ask you to provide your name and contact details so we can get in touch to discuss your concerns. Once your report is processed, your report form will be destroyed.

Name:

Job title:

Employer:

Phone:

Mobile:

Describe your concern:

Convenient time to call:

What happens next?

- We will contact you to discuss your health and safety concerns
- We will write a report on your behalf
- We remove any information that might identify you
- We send the report to the company for a response
- Once we receive the response we will then provide you with a copy

Fill out the form, cut along the line and seal.



CONFIDENTIAL

POSTAGE
PAID

FREEPOST CIRAS

Fold along the dotted line and seal edges

CIRAS
CIRAS
CIRAS
CIRAS

Confidential Safety Hotline

If you have a safety concern,
make the right call and report it.

Tell your supervisor, or contact us in
complete confidence.

Call 0800 4 101 101 or download our
CIRAS reporting app.



We find safety in listening.